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——Uratur Vestis amore tuæ. Ovid.

Tuesday, September 1. 1713.

I Have, in a former *Precaution*, endeavoured to shew the Mechanism of an *Epick Poem*, and given the Reader Prescriptions whereby he may, without the scarce Ingredient of a *Genius*, compose the several Parts of that great Work. I shall now treat of an Affair of more general Importance, and make *Dress* the Subject of the following Paper.

Dress is grown of universal Use in the Conduct of Life. Civilities and Respect are only paid to Appearance. 'Tis a Varnish that gives a Lustre to every Action, a *Passe-par-tout* that introduces us into all polite Assemblies, and the only certain Method of making most of the Youth of our Nation conspicuous.

There was formerly an absurd Notion among the Men of Letters, that to establish themselves in the Character of Wits, it was absolutely necessary to shew a Contempt of Dress. This injudicious Affectation of theirs flatten'd all their Conversation, took off the Force of every Expression, and incapacitated a Female Audience from giving Attention to any thing they said. While the Man of Dress catches their Eyes as well as Ears, and at every Judicrous Turn obtains a Laugh of Applause by Way of Compliment.

I shall lay down as an established Maxim, which hath been received in all Ages, that no Person can *Dress* without a Genius.

A Genius is never to be acquired by Art, but is the Gift of Nature; it may be discovered even in Infancy. Little Master will smile when you shake his Plume of Feathers before him, and thrust its little Knuckels into *Papa*'s Full-bottom; Miss will toy with her Mother's *Machlen* Lace, and gaze on the gaudy Colours of a Fan; she smacks her Lips for a Kiss at the Appearance of a Gentleman in Embroidery, and is frighted at the Indecency of the House-Maid's blue Apron: As she grows up, the Dress of her Baby begins to be her Care, and you will see a genteel Fancy open it self in the Ornaments of the little Macine.

We have a kind of *Sketch of Dress*, if I may so call it, among us, which, as the Invention was Foreign, is called a *Dishabille*: every thing is thrown on with a loose and careless Air, yet a Genius discovers it self even through this Negligence of Dress, just as you may see the Masterly Hand of a Painter in three or four swift Strokes of the Pencil.

The most fruitful in *Genius's* is the *French* Nation; we owe most of our janty Fashions, now in Vogue, to some adept Beau among them. Their Ladies exert the whole Scope of their Fancies upon every new Petticoat; every Head-dress undergoes a Change; and not a Lady of Genius will appear in the same Shape two Days together: so that we may impute the Scarcity of Genius's in our Climate to the Stagnation of Fashions.

The Ladies among us have a superior Genius to the Men; which hath for some Years past shot out in several exorbitant Inventions for the greater Consumption of our Manufacture. While the Men have contented themselves with the Retrenchment of the Hat, or the various Scallop of the Pocket; the Ladies have sunk the Head dress, incloset themselves in the Circumference of the Hoop Petticoat; Furbelows and Flounces have been disposed of at Will; the Stays have been lower'd behind, for the better displaying the Beauties of the Neck; not to mention the various rolling of the Sleeve, and those other nice Circumstances of Dress upon which every Lady employs her Fancy at Pleasure.

The Sciences of *Poetry* and *Dress* have so near an Alliance to each other, that the Rules of the one, with very little Variation, may serve for the other.

As in a Poem all the several Parts of it must have a Harmony with the Whole; so, to keep to the Propriety of Dress, the Coat, Waistcoat and Breeches must be of the same Piece.

As *Aristotle* obliges all Dramatick Writers to a strict Observance of *Time*, *Place* and *Action*, in order to compose a just Work of this kind of Poetry; so it is also absolutely necessary for a Person that applies himself to the Study of Dress, to have a strict Regard to these three Particulars.

To begin with the *Time*. What is more absurd than the Velvet Gown in Summer? and what more agreeable in the Winter? The Muff and Fur are preposterous in *June*, which are charmingly supply'd by the *Turkey* Handkerchief and the Fan. Every thing must be suitable to the Season, and there can be no Propriety in Dress without a strict Regard to *Time*.

You must have no less Respect to *Place*. What gives a Lady a more easie Air than the wrapping Gown in the Morning at the Tea Table? The *Bath* countenances the Men of Dress in shewing themselves at the Pump in their *Indian* Night-Gowns, without the least Indecorum.

Action is what gives the Spirit both to Writing and Dress. Nothing appears [illegible] without *Action*; the Head, the Arms [illegible] all conspire to give a Habit a [illegible] What distinguishes the Air of the Court from that of the Country but *Action*? A Lady by the easiest Toss of her Head will shew a Set of Ribons to advantage; by a Pinch of Snuff judiciously taken will display the glittering Ornament of her little Finger; by the new-modelling her Tucker, at one View present you with a fine turned Hand, and a rising Bosom. In order to be a Proficient in *Action*, I cannot sufficiently recommend the Science of *Dancing*: This will give the Feet an easie Gate, and the Arms a Gracefulness of Motion. If a Person hath not a strict Regard to these three above-mentioned Rules of Antiquity, the richest Dress will appear full and affected, and the most gay Habit fantastical and tawdry.

As different Sorts of Poetry require a different Style; the *Elegy* tender and mournful; the *Ode* lofty and sprightly; the *Epic* sublime, *&c.* So must the Widow confess her Grief in the Veil; the Bride frequently makes her Joy and Exultation conspicuous in the Silver Brocade; and the Plume and the scarlet Dye is requisite to give the Soldier a Martial Air. There is another kind of Occasional Dress in Use among the Ladies, I mean the riding Habit, which some have not injudiciously stiled *the Hermophroditical*, by Reason of its Masculine and Feminine Composition; but I shall rather chuse to call it the *Pindaric*; as its first Institution was at a *New-Market* Horse Race, and as it is a mixture of the Sublimity of the *Epic* with the easie Softness of the *Ode*.

There sometimes arises a great Genius in Dress, who cannot content himself with meerly Copying from others; but will, as he sees occasion, strike out into the long Pocket, slash'd Sleeve, or something particular in the disposition of his Lace, or the flourish of his Embroidery. Such a Person, like the Masters of other Sciences, will shew that he hath a Manner of his own.

On the contrary, there are some Pretenders in Dress who shine out but by halves; whether it be for want of Genius or Mony. A *Dancing Master* of the lowest Rank seldom fails of the Scarlet Stocking and the Red Heel; and shows a particular respect to the *Leg* and *Foot*, to which he owes his Subsistance: When at the same time perhaps all the